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Cable
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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 04566

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INFO: USLO POL P/M DCM ICE LEGAT DAO AMB

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CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MSISON
DRAFTED: ECON:EWILLIAMS
CLEARED: DCM:RALBRIGHT ECON:OJ CG:MC LEGATT:DR USLO:MS DAO:MW FCS:MO

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INFO RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 004566

SIPDIS

JUSTICE FOR OIA, AFMLS, AND NDDS
TREASURY FOR FINCEN
DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL
STATE FOR INL, NEA/RA, AND NEA/ARPI

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: 2004-2005 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY
REPORT (INCSR), UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

REF: STATE 248987

¶1. The body of this cable is the submission of the narcotics section of the 2004-2005 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) for the United Arab Emirates.

¶2. Begin text:

¶I. Summary

Although not a narcotics-producing nation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is believed to be a transshipment point for traffickers moving illegal drugs from the major drug-producing countries, especially Afghanistan, westward. Frequent reports of seizures of illegal drugs in the UAE during the past year underscore this conclusion. Most seizures have been of hashish. There are several other factors that render the UAE a way-station, including its proximity to major drug cultivation regions in Southwest Asia and a long (700 kilometers) coastline. High volumes of shipping render UAE ports vulnerable to exploitation by narco-traffickers. Published statistics on narcotics seizures and domestic addiction reveal a growing drug problem among UAE and third-country nationals, which is notable given the country's harsh drug laws. A Ministry of Health report in late 1998 asserted that there were approximately 12,500 drug addicts in the country of 3.1 million people. The UAE is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

II. Status of Country

A major regional financial center and hub for commercial shipping and trade, the UAE is believed to be a transshipment point for illegal narcotics from the drug-cultivating regions of southwest Asia, to Europe, to Africa and the United States. Western Europe

is the principal market for these drugs, and Africa is becoming an increasingly prominent secondary market. Factors that contribute to the role of the UAE as a transshipment point are the emergence of Dubai and Sharjah as regional centers in the transportation of passengers and cargo, a porous land border with Oman, and the fact that a number of ports in the UAE are de facto "free ports"--transshipped cargo are not subject to inspection, as are other goods that enter the country.

In the first half of 2004, Abu Dhabi Police reported that drug crimes increased 5% over 2003, with more than 800 drug-related crimes, of which more than 100 involved drug smuggling.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2004

Policy Initiatives. The UAE continued in 2004 to advance its national drug strategy based on intensifying security at the country's air and sea ports and patrols along the coastline, reducing demand of illegal drugs through educational campaigns, enforcing harsh penalties, and rehabilitating drug addicts. The UAE's Federal Supreme Court issued an important ruling in 2003 regarding proof that drug-offenders actually consume drugs in the UAE before they can be prosecuted. The Supreme Court decided that UAE law enforcement officials could not prosecute drug-users if the consumption took place in another country. A positive blood test for drugs is considered evidence of consumption, but does not determine whether the drug-taking occurred in the UAE or abroad.

Law Enforcement Efforts.

Anti-drug agencies have been active in 4,774 cases from 1999 to September 2004 involving 7,611 suspected drug dealers. During this same time period, officials seized more than 18,700 kg of hashish, 400 kg of heroin, and 100 kg of opium, a street value of more than \$25 million dollars.

In 2003, the UAE Ministry of Interior established a countrywide database that is accessible to emirate-level police departments. This is a major step forward in coordinating narcotics-related information throughout the UAE.

Punishment for drug offenses is severe; a 1995 law stipulates capital punishment as the penalty for drug trafficking. No executions, however, have ever taken place, and sentences usually are commuted to life imprisonment. In June, an Omani policeman was sentenced to life imprisonment for possessing and smuggling drugs over the land border. In December, an Asian woman was sentenced to death for drug dealing, although she is appealing the verdict.

Several other high-profile seizures in 2004 indicate that UAE authorities continue to take seriously their responsibility to interdict drug smuggling and distribution. In July, federal authorities seized 203 kg of hashish in a Pakistani ship docked at Khor Fakkan Port that were destined for Saudi Arabia. In a separate operation, the federal authorities seized more than 50 kg of heroin en route to Kuwait. Local authorities are also working to further secure land borders, with Abu Dhabi Police seizing more than 600 kg of hashish transiting the UAE from Oman to Saudi Arabia.

The UAE is increasingly working with other countries to stop trafficking gangs. Cooperation has resulted in arrests in several countries, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Pakistan, Iran, Australia, Canada, and Holland. Cooperation has also resulted in the arrests of drug gangs in 12 cases with neighboring Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. The UAE signed a landmark counternarcotics agreement with Iran in 2003 providing for cooperation against production, distribution, and smuggling of illicit drugs across the UAE-Iran sea border.

Corruption. UAE officials aggressively pursue and arrest individuals involved in illegal narcotics trafficking and/or abuse. There is no evidence that corruption, including narcotics-related corruption, of public officials is a systemic problem.

Agreements and Treaties. No extradition or mutual legal assistance treaties (MLAT) exist between the United States and the UAE, although the two countries are starting discussions on an MLAT and extradition treaty in 2005. The UAE is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1988 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The UAE has signed, but has not yet ratified, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

In November, the UAE announced the establishment of a UN sub-office on Drugs and Crimes. The UAE government funded the estimated \$3 million dollar cost of the office and contributed an additional \$50,000 to the UN anti-narcotics program. The sub-

office will operate under the Cairo-based UN regional Office on Drugs and Crime, and will be responsible for coordinating national anti-drugs strategies and integrating the strategies into the UN's comprehensive global program.

Cultivation/Production. There is no evidence of drug cultivation and/or production in the UAE.

Drug Flow/Transit. Narcotics smuggling from south and southwest Asia continues to Europe and Africa and-to a significantly lesser degree-the United States via the UAE. Hashish, heroin, and opium shipments originate in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran and are smuggled in cargo containers, via small vessels and powerboats, and/or sent overland via Oman. The UAE, and Dubai in particular, is a major regional transportation and shipping hub. High volumes of shipping render the UAE vulnerable to exploitation by narcotics traffickers. UAE authorities recognize that the number of human carriers of illicit narcotics transiting local airports is also on the rise. The police also caught a number of traffickers trying to smuggle drugs over the UAE land border by truck and horseback.

Recognizing the need for increased monitoring at its commercial shipping ports, airports, and borders, the UAEG is making an effort to tighten inspections of cargo containers as well as passengers transiting the UAE. In December 2004, the UAE signed the Container Security Initiative which will result in the tightening and expansion of cargo-reporting requirements. Customs officials and inspectors received specialized training on ferreting out prohibited items from U.S. DHS and Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security in 2004. UAE authorities also received training on seaport interdiction and global transshipment this year. Customs officials randomly search containers and follow up leads of suspicious cargo. Dubai Ports Authority purchased state-of-the-art equipment for rapid, thorough searches of shipping containers and vehicles.

Domestic Programs (Demand Reduction).

In 2003, the UAEG released a report outlining the drug problem in the UAE. The report noted that the majority of UAE drug users take their first dose abroad, primarily because of peer pressure. Statistics reveal that 75 percent of drug users in the UAE prefer hashish, 13 percent use heroin, while 6 percent use morphine. The report illustrates a clear relationship between drug abuse and level of education-75 percent of arrested drug users in 2002 were high school graduates, but only 2 percent were university graduates. Local press reports the street value of one kilogram of Pakistani hashish to be an approximate 5,000 Dirhams (\$1,362) in Abu Dhabi and about 4,500 Dirhams (\$1,226) in Dubai. The price is said to be highest in Abu Dhabi and Dubai because the customer base in these two emirates tends to be more affluent.

The focus of the UAE's domestic program is to reduce demand through public awareness campaigns directed at young people and the establishment of rehabilitation centers. UAE officials believe that adherence to Muslim religious mores as well as imposing severe prison sentences for individuals convicted of drug offenses are an effective deterrent to narcotics abuse. An affluent country, the UAE has established an extensive treatment and rehabilitation program for its citizens. There is a rehab center in Abu Dhabi, two in Dubai, and one each in Ajman and Sharjah for those identified as addicts. In accordance with federal law no. 15/1995, UAE nationals who are addicted can present themselves to the police or a rehabilitation center and be exempted from criminal prosecution. Those nationals who do not turn themselves into local authorities are referred to the legal system for prosecution. Third-country nationals or "guest workers," who make up approximately 80 percent of the UAE's population, generally receive prison sentences upon conviction of narcotics offenses and are deported upon completing their sentences.

Most UAE nationals arrested on drug charges are placed in one of the UAE's drug treatment programs. They undergo a two-year drug rehabilitation program, which includes family counseling/therapy.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

The Road Ahead. The USG will continue to support the UAE's efforts to devise and employ bilateral/ multilateral strategies against illicit narcotics trafficking, border/export control and money laundering. The USG and UAE are starting discussions on MLAT and extradition treaties , which would facilitate the exchange of information related to drug and financial crimes. The USG will encourage the UAEG to focus enforcement efforts on dismantling major trafficking organizations and prosecuting their

leaders, and to enact export control and border security
legislation.

End text.

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